

IN COMMEMORATION OF TEXAS
INDEPENDENCE DAY**HON. GENE GREEN**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 2, 2004

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, today marks the independence of Texas, the greatest, most diverse state in the Union. Texas also has some of the most interesting and instructive history. I believe the lessons of Texas' struggle for independence are no less important today.

One hundred and sixty-eight years ago, March 2, 1836, Texan delegates met at Washington-On-The-Brazos to sign the Texas Declaration of Independence.

Less than 100 years after American patriots threw off the tyrannical British Empire's military domination, Texans and Tejanos were forced to launch a similar struggle against the military dictator, General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna.

In the words of the Texas Declaration of Independence, the people's government had been "forcibly changed, without their consent, from a restricted federative republic, composed of sovereign states, to a consolidated central military despotism."

As Sam Houston and other Texan delegates signed the Texas Declaration of Independence, General Santa Anna's army was besieging the Texans and Tejanos at the Alamo in San Antonio. That fortress fell four days later on the morning of March 6, 1836, when Lt. Colonel William Barrett Travis, Tennessee Congressman David Crockett, and approximately 200 other Texan and Tejano defenders were killed in action. Thankfully, their deaths were not in vain, as the remaining Texas forces under Sam Houston were able to surprise and defeat the much larger Mexican Army at the Battle of San Jacinto, just east of my hometown of Houston, Texas.

At San Jacinto, noted Tejano patriot Captain Juan Seguin commanded a cavalry company during this final victory and later became a Senator in the Republic of Texas.

Like the American patriots in 1776, Texans did not create a perfect state with their independence. It would not be until June 19th, or Juneteenth, 1865, that Texas' African-American citizens achieved the freedom that is an inalienable human right. Every Juneteenth, we remember that the struggle for equal rights is long and difficult, and demands our enduring commitment.

A popular misconception of the Texas War for Independence is that the conflict was a case of Anglos fighting Mexicans. But accurate Texas history tells us that Hispanics who had long lived in Texas mostly did not consider themselves to be Mexicans, but instead thought of themselves as Tejanos. Tejanos inhabited Texas long before Mexico existed, and they lived there for the same reasons Anglos later moved there—freedom and vast productive land.

So when General Santa Anna's forces began plundering areas of Texas, Tejanos and Texans both reacted with horror.

It is inspiring to me that many Tejanos joined the fight for independence when the Mexican government became an exploitive military regime. The brotherhood of freedom can be stronger than the brotherhood of ethnicity, as Tejanos proved at Gonzalez, Bexar, Goliad, the Alamo, and finally along the banks of the San Jacinto River.

On Texas Independence Day we reflect on our shared achievements, celebrate our peaceful cooperation with Mexico, and renew our commitment to preserving our representative government, freedom, and human and civil rights.

Thank you Mr. Speaker, long live Texas, and I yield back the balance of my time.

TRIBUTE TO STEVE CARTER

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 2, 2004

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I rise before you to pay tribute to a remarkable public servant from my district. After an impressive thirty-three year career, Judge Steve Carter recently retired from the Garfield County bench, and I would like to take this opportunity to highlight his life and accomplishments before this body of Congress and this nation today.

As a rising attorney in 1972, Steve was appointed to the Garfield County bench at the age of twenty-seven by then-Governor Love. He has won much praise from his colleagues and his fellow Coloradans over the years, both for his commitment to the judicial system and to his community. Steve has worked tirelessly to resolve many of his community's ailments, such as drug and alcohol abuse, and devoted much of his time and energy to overseeing the county's juvenile court system. He has truly enjoyed a wonderful career in jurisprudence, and his many years on the bench have earned him the distinction of being the longest serving county judge in the State of Colorado.

Mr. Speaker, with almost four decades of service and experience under his belt, I can guarantee that Judge Robert Carter will be sorely missed. He selflessly dedicated his time and efforts toward the betterment of Garfield County and the State of Colorado, and I wish him all the best in his retirement. Thanks for your service, Judge Carter, and good luck in your future endeavors.

THE 132ND ANNIVERSARY OF
YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK**HON. RUSH D. HOLT**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 2, 2004

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize that yesterday was the 132nd anniversary of the founding of Yellowstone National Park, the world's first national park and the crown jewel in America's national park system and the model of parks for the world.

The most remarkable thing about Yellowstone is that it offers modern-day visitors a chance to experience the same sense of wonder and disbelief that the first European American explorers did back in the late 1860s.

Although Yellowstone has been a model for parks around the world, no other country has the splendor that Yellowstone has. These explorers came upon such astonishing sights that they were skeptical that anyone would actually believe their descriptions of the area we now know as Yellowstone National Park. They thought that their tales of gushing geysers, bubbling mud pots, towering waterfalls, and dramatic canyons would be dismissed as the

fantastical delusions of people who had spent too much time out in the wilderness.

Thankfully, their stories did eventually capture the nation's imagination, and on March 1, 1872, President Ulysses S. Grant signed into law a bill establishing Yellowstone as our first national park, comprising an area of approximately two million acres near the headwaters of the Yellowstone River. Yellowstone, which preceded the founding of the National Park Service by 44 years, has become the image of national parks across the country and throughout the world.

I have visited Yellowstone myself from time to time during different seasons and am always astounded by its spectacular beauty. Old Faithful, the reliable geyser that represents the park for most Americans, is but one of the 300 geysers there, which account for two-thirds of the world's geysers. Yellowstone boasts a total of over 10,000 thermal features, including bubbling mudpots, steaming fumaroles, and brightly colored hot springs.

These thermal features are fueled by a giant volcanic caldera, the remains of a tremendous eruption of tens of thousands of years ago. Surrounding this caldera are majestic peaks rising over 11,000 feet. Within the caldera is Yellowstone Lake, the largest freshwater lake above 7000 feet in North America.

Nearby, the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone astounds visitors to nearly the same degree as the canyon that shares its name further south in Arizona. In the canyon and across the backcountry are Yellowstone's famous waterfalls, numbering around 290 and in some cases towering over 300 feet.

Yellowstone is also home to large populations of some of the animal species that best represent the United States. The only remaining wild American bison herd makes its home in the park, accompanied by countless elk. Bald eagles nest throughout the park, and the endangered gray wolf has been reintroduced, becoming a real treat for wildlife watchers.

In short, Yellowstone is a place where fantasy becomes reality, where some of the most majestic lands in the world have become the embodiment of America's natural splendor. It's no accident that the park gets around three million visitors every year, coming from just about every one of our districts.

I urge all of my colleagues to visit this park if they have not already had the chance, and to remember the legacy and value of this spectacular parcel of land. It will be a reminder of why Congress has designated Yellowstone and other natural parks for future generations to enjoy.

Mr. Speaker, protecting Yellowstone and all of our natural parks is a noble and patriotic duty. These parks are repositories of our national heritage and preserve our most precious natural and cultural resources. Too often, unfortunately, the Park Service has found itself lacking the funds it needs to protect and ensure visitor access to everything from Revolutionary and Civil War sites to the most majestic public lands across the country. NPS is currently facing a \$600 million shortfall in operations alone, to say nothing of a continuing maintenance backlog that is approaching \$5 billion.

As we move through this legislative session and begin the process of determining our funding priorities, I hope my colleagues will remember our national parks and see fit to support them and the men and women who work there.